

## RESISTANCE TO DUMBED-DOWN CURRICULUM

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WHEN I was a learner at South Peninsula High School, I came into contact with who was to become one of my favourite maths and Latin teachers, Daphne Wessels, in 1967.

She would hand out the Teachers' League of SA (TLSA) journal to interested learners. This was a wealth of educational and political material that moulded my thinking.

The TLSA prided itself on building the political consciousness of teachers, not only in South Africa but across the world. It had great thinkers of the calibre of Phumla Gqola, Ben Kies, Helen Kies, RO Dudley, IB Tabata, Livingstone Mqotsi, Ivan Abrahams and Willie van Schoor.

They instilled in generations of teachers the desire to be the best in their subjects and for the liberation of people from oppression. In 1994, the TLSA refused to become part of the negotiated settlement, believing that the oppressed would be sold out. Readers can decide for themselves whether the prediction has proved to be true.

In recent articles in the Cape Argus, two writers praised the Western Cape Education Department head's work. When OutcomesBased Education was introduced in 1998, Brian Schreuder was one of its proponents, together with the then University of the Western Cape (UWC) rector, Brian O'Connell, and head of business, strategy and stakeholder management, Anne Schlebusch. The Education Department held road shows to blow the trumpet of OBE.

I belonged to the Western Cape Parents Teacher Student Forum and we opposed the philosophy of OBE. We studied the effect it had on education in the US, Canada, Australia, Great Britain and New Zealand. Most of the teachers in those countries said it was the dumbing down of learners and teachers. Yet the National Department of Education pursued this dumbing down system.

I was principal at South Peninsula High school and we opposed OBE. Schreuder called me, along with a senior teacher and parent of one of the learners, into his office and warned that the school would be left behind in education and that we had better follow the OBE system.

We all know it has failed miserably. South Peninsula, despite the warning, continued to do well using tried and tested methods.

In 2005, the school faced losing one of its two deputy principals, because of the Morkel Model in determining the number of teaching posts a school qualified for and which depended on the money allocation the WCED had at its disposal. Ronald Swart, the head of department, refused to see me and the two deputies. Schreuder said there was nothing he could do. It was left to then education MEC Cameron Dugmore to intervene. He allowed the school to continue with two deputies.

In 2010, the school informed the WCED that if the Common Task Assessments were not scrapped, the school would refuse to write the tests as it considered them downright stupid. Schreuder warned that disciplinary action would follow if the school did not abide by the regulations. I have found him to be a bureaucrat who sacrificed principles on the altar of the WCED.

Teachers who reach 65 have to retire. Here we have a person over 65 appointed by the WCED. Were there no suitable replacements? I find this unbelievable. I suspect nepotism.

I'm sorry I cannot agree with the glowing sentiments expressed by MPL Khalid Sayed and principal RR Naidoo. I do, however, agree with Sayed's statement about MEC Debbie Schafer. He is spot on.

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